

Testimony for the Appropriations Committee

February 24, 2022

My name is Maryse Wicker and I am from Mystic. I am testifying on the Governor's proposed budget H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 that unfortunately does not include critical funding for our safety net providers and their employees.

After decades of underfunding, Connecticut's direct support providers are in crisis mode because the effects of the pandemic have impacted their ability to attract and retain direct care workers and other employees. This staff is critically important to the safety and well-being of many of Connecticut's residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), including my own son Mathieu.

If my son could testify in person, he would tell you that:

- I have seen the staff I love suffer because they have to work 7 days a week or shifts longer than 24 hours due to the pandemic and staffing crisis.
- I have lost staff I love to burnout due to the pandemic and staffing crisis
- My staff are sometimes too tired to do fun things I want to do because they have been on shift for too long or haven't had a day off in months
- I require 2 staff to be able to safely access the community. I have worked hard to get to the point where this is possible, but sometimes there just aren't 2 staff available to help me.
- When I was hospitalized last year, I was scared and confused, and I needed a staff to stay with me so I didn't hurt myself or others. But there weren't enough staff, so my parents had to come overnight some days.
- We have less money to buy foods I like or do fun things because of the amount of cleaning supplies we have to purchase
- If I wanted to go on vacation, I would not be able to do so; vacations have been put on hold because the agency can't afford the additional staff expenses.

Without your help, our state's community service delivery system will continue to shrink and our loved ones will bear the brunt of this loss. We are already experiencing the worst staffing crisis that service providers have ever seen, which has resulted in an inability to resume programs paused during COVID and caused a rebound effect for family caregivers who are unable to return to work and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

Now more than ever, we need to ensure that critically necessary funding of \$150 million is included in this year's budget for the state's non-profit providers who care for our loved ones on a daily basis. We urge your support and ask that you add this funding to the budget before this committee. My Child Matters.